Blessing of an Organization Concerned with Public Need

Introduction

574 Faithful to the Gospel, the Church actively encourages and supports every good endeavor of the human community. All the people of God have the duty of devoting their efforts to relieving the sufferings of others in cases of public need or danger. But particular recognition and support are due to those associations that by their concentration of resources are able more effectively to serve public need and that also enlist others to assist in providing proper help in emergencies.
575 The name "Organizations Concerned with Public Need" refers here to such groups as ambulance companies, fire departments, those concerned with flood control, etc. The term includes those that come under the jurisdiction of a civil government.

576 The present order maybe used by a priest or deacon. While maintaining the structure and chief elements of the rite, the celebrant should adapt the celebration to the circumstances of the place and the people involved.

Order of Blessing

Introductory Rites

577 When the community has gathered, a suitable song may be sung. After the singing, the celebrant says:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All make the sign of the cross and reply:

Amen.

578 The celebrant greets those present in the following or other suitable words, taken mainly from sacred Scripture.

May the Lord, who went about doing good, be with you.

All make the following or some other suitable reply.

And also with you.

579 In the following or similar words, the celebrant prepares those present for the blessing.

God is love. In the desire to make us share in this love, he sent his Son into the world to come to our aid and in gentle kindness to help those who were weak, sick, or unfortunate. In his great love for all of us, Christ said that whatever we do for the least among us we do for him. He called those who show mercy "blessed of his Father" and promised them eternal life.

Let us then pray for the Lord's richest blessings on the members of this organization, who are devoted to helping their brothers and sisters.

Reading of the Word of God

580 A reader, another person present, or the celebrant reads a text of sacred Scripture. The reading chosen should be one that best applies to the aims of the organization.

Brothers and sisters, listen to the words of the holy gospel according to Matthew:

25:31-46

As often as you did it for the least among you, you did it for me.

Jesus said to his disciples: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?' And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.' Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.' Then they will answer and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?' He will answer them, 'Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.' And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

581 Or:

Brothers and sisters, listen to the words of the prophet Isaiah:

58:lab, 5-11

Share your bread with the hungry.

Cry out full-throated and unsparingly,
lift up your voice like a trumpet blast;
Is this the manner of fasting I wish,
of keeping a day of penance:
That a man bow his head like a reed,
and lie in sackcloth and ashes?
Do you call this a fast,
a day acceptable to the LORD?
This, rather, is the fasting I wish,
releasing those bound unjustly,
untying the thongs of the yoke;
Setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke;
Sharing your bread with the hungry,
sheltering the oppressed and the homeless;
Clothing the naked when you see them,
and not turning your back on your own.
Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,
and your wound shall quickly be healed;
Your vindication shall go before you,
and the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.
Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer,
you shall cry for help, and he will say: Here I am!
If you remove from your midst oppression,
false accusation and malicious speech;
If you bestow your bread on the hungry
and satisfy the afflicted;
Then light shall rise for you in the darkness,

and the gloom shall become for you like midday;
Then the LORD will guide you always
and give you plenty even on the parched land.

582 Or:

Tobit 12:6-13-Do good, and evil will not find its way to you.

Sirach 3:33-4:11-Do not grieve the one who is hungry.

Sirach 7:36-39 (Greek, 7:32-35)-Avoid not those who weep. .Mark 2:1-12-Four people arrived carrying a paralyzed man to him.

Luke 10:25-37-Who is my neighbor?

John 13:12-17-You must wash each other's feet.

583 As circumstances suggest, one of the following responsorial psalms may be sung or said, or some other suitable song.

R. Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

Psalm 34

I will bless the LORD at all times;
his praise shall be ever in my mouth.
Let my soul glory in the LORD:
the lowly will hear me and be glad. R.

Glorify the LORD with me,
let us together extol his name.
I sought the LORD and he answered me
and delivered me from all my fears. R.

Look to him that you may be radiant with joy,
and your faces may not blush with shame.
When the afflicted man called out, the LORD heard,
and from all his distress he saved him. R.

Fear the LORD, you his holy ones,
for nought is lacking to those who fear him.
The great grow poor and hungry;
but those who seek the LORD want for no good thing. R.

Come, children, hear me;
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.
Which of you desires life,
and takes delight in prosperous days? R.

Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4, 11-12, 13-14, 17-18

R. (v. 8) The Lord is kind and merciful, slow to anger and rich in compassion.

584 As circumstances suggest, the celebrant may give those present a brief explanation of the biblical text, so that they may understand through faith the meaning of the celebration.

Intercessions

585 As circumstances suggest, the prayer of blessing may be preceded by the intercessions. The celebrant introduces them and an assisting minister or one of those present announces the intentions. From the following intentions those best suited to the occasion may be used or adapted, or other intentions that apply to the particular circumstances may be composed. The intentions are followed immediately by the prayer of blessing, no. 587.

The celebrant says:

Christ the Lord bore our infirmities and endured our sufferings. He went about doing good, leaving us an example to follow. Having Christ's charity as the foundation of all we do, let us pray to him, saying:

R. Lord, teach us to serve our sisters and brothers.

Or:

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

Assisting minister:

Lord, for our sake you were poor and came not to be served but to serve; grant that we too may love our brothers and sisters and help them in their need. (For this we pray:) R.

Assisting minister:

By your redeeming work you made a new world where we have become neighbors to each other and are enabled to love one another; grant that we too may strive toward a way of life in keeping with the Gospel. (For this we pray:) R.

Assisting minister:

You want all people to share in the blessings you have brought; stir the hearts of many among your people, so that, moved by your love, they may gladly devote themselves to assisting those in need and in misfortune. (For this we pray:) R

Assisting minister:

You willed that your Mother should also be our Mother; grant that, whenever we turn to her for protection, we will find in her a helper sent to us from heaven. (For this we pray:) R.

586 When there are no intercessions, the celebrant, before the prayer of blessing and using the following or other similar words, invites those present to ask for God's help.

My brothers and sisters, let us pray that God who is love will enkindle our hearts with the fire of the Holy Spirit, to give us an ardent love for others, like Christ's love for us.

As circumstances suggest, all may then pray for a moment in silence before the prayer of blessing.

Prayer of Blessing

587 With hands outstretched, the celebrant continues with the prayer of blessing.

Blessed are you, Lord, God of mercy,
who through your Son gave us a marvelous example of charity
and the great commandment of love for one another.
Send down your blessings on these your servants,
who so generously devote themselves to helping others.
When they are called on in times of need,

let them faithfully serve you in their neighbor.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

Concluding Rite

588 The prayer of blessing may be followed by one of the following antiphons or some other suitable song.

R. If there is love among you, all will know that you are my disciples.

Jesus said to his disciples. R.

589 Or:

Ant. Where charity and love are found, there is God.

The love of Christ has gathered us together into one.
Let us rejoice and be glad in him.
Let us fear and love the living God,
and love each other from the depths of our heart. Ant.

Therefore when we are together,
let us take heed not to be divided in mind.
Let there be an end to bitterness and quarrels, an end to strife,
and in our midst be Christ our God. Ant.

And in company with the blessed, may we see
your face in glory, Christ our God,
pure and unbounded joy
for ever and for ever. Ant.